Seizing the Strategic Communication Initiative

A Monograph
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The United States military has conducted counterinsurgency campaigns against violent Islamic extremists for the last eight years and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. However, communication-minded, technology-savvy, insurgencies have generally outperformed the military in strategic communication. The U.S. military generally conducts strategic communication in counterinsurgency operations from a culture of reticence that ensures that communication and information operations are ineffective and reactive in nature. Counterinsurgent forces should adopt a culture of engagement in order to seize the strategic communication initiative from the insurgent and increase operational effectiveness. Colombia provides a clear example of a counterinsurgent that has seized the strategic communication initiative from the FARC by successfully adopting a culture of engagement that is proactive, leader-driven, innovative, adaptive, and sustainable. Despite making significant progress in recent years in adapting to the operational environment and moving towards a culture of engagement, these changes are not yet holistic and have not allowed the military to seize the initiative in strategic communication.

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Abstract

SEIZING THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE by Major Keith A. Kramer, U.S. Army, 49 pages.

The United States military has conducted counterinsurgency campaigns against violent Islamic extremists for the last eight years and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. However, communication-minded, technology-savvy, insurgencies have generally outperformed the military in strategic communication. The U.S. military generally conducts strategic communication in counterinsurgency operations from a culture of reticence that ensures that communication and information operations are ineffective and reactive in nature. Counterinsurgent forces should adopt a culture of engagement in order to seize the strategic communication initiative from the insurgent and increase operational effectiveness. Colombia provides a clear example of a counterinsurgent that has seized the strategic communication initiative from the FARC by successfully adopting a culture of engagement that is proactive, leader-driven, innovative, adaptive, and sustainable. Despite making significant progress in recent years in adapting to the operational environment and moving towards a culture of engagement, these changes are not yet holistic and have not allowed the military to seize the initiative in strategic communication.

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Introduction

The United States military has conducted counterinsurgency campaigns against violent Islamic extremists for the last eight years and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. These campaigns differ in cause of the insurgencies, strategy applied, resources committed, and degree of success over periods of time, but the importance of strategic communication remains constant across these operations and is critical for operational success. However, communication-minded, technology-savvy, insurgencies have generally outperformed the United States, and her allies, and have seized the initiative in communicating their message. This has helped to prevent the partner governments from gaining legitimacy and the support of the people.

The U.S. military generally conducts strategic communication in counterinsurgency operations from a culture of reticence. Reticence ensures that strategic communication and information operations are unresponsive to the environment and reactive to the situation. While there are some benefits to being reticent, the military, and all counterinsurgent forces, should adopt a culture of engagement in order to communicate proactively and seize the communication initiative from the insurgent. The military has made significant progress in recent years in adapting to the operational environment and adopting a culture of engagement, but these changes are not yet holistic and have not allowed the United States to seize the initiative in strategic communication.

However, it is a false dichotomy to think in terms of pure reticence or engagement. Reticence provides some positive effects in protecting operational security (OPSEC) and maintaining legitimacy through apolitical behavior that in some instances make reticence appropriate. Additionally, engagement contains the risks that subordinates will speak outside their area of expertise and create mixed messages that could reduce public trust. In practice, the counterinsurgent force needs to operate more towards engagement than reticence in most situations.

One of the most infamous examples of a strategic communication failure in current U.S. military operations is the U.S. military's response to the Abu Ghraib detainee abuse scandal. The senior American commander received the digital images of American Soldiers mistreating detainees several months before the media released them.[1] His staff advised him not to release the pictures or to comment on detainee operations in the prison, due to an ongoing investigation. Eventually these images reached the media despite attempts to suppress them. This put the military in a reactive mode characterized by senior leaders not responding to media inquiries or explaining the situation to the public. Instead, the standard response was that the incident was under investigation.[2]

The Abu Ghraib incident is a clear failure to align U.S. policy with respect to detainees and the actions of the units responsible for the prison. It is also an example of a military headquarters attempting to hide negative events from the public, which made the outcry even more pronounced. This event, and the general reticence surrounding it, had an immediate negative effect on the legitimacy of the military's counterinsurgency efforts and resulted in increased support for the insurgency by the Iraqi population.

The United States is not the only counterinsurgent force that has struggled with gaining the initiative in strategic communication from the insurgents. Initially, Colombia was reticent and lost the strategic communication initiative against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the other insurgent groups they faced. However, President Uribe and the military have fostered a culture of engagement that has supported Colombia in seizing the strategic communication initiative from the leftist insurgencies and increased operational effectiveness.

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[1] Cirillo, Melissa, and Sherry Richiardi, "Abu Ghraib Timeline," American Journalism Review, http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=3730, (Accessed March 3, 2010).

[2] James R. Schlesinger, *Independent Panel to Review DoD Detention Operations* (Arlington: Independent Panel, 2004), 51.

The purpose of this monograph is to outline the environmental and organizational factors that insurgents use to seize the initiative in strategic communication; identify how adopting a culture of engagement can help counterinsurgents to seize the initiative; and make recommendations that the U.S. military can implement to seize the initiative and conduct more effective strategic communication in support of counterinsurgency operations.

What is Strategic Communication?

A central problem with strategic communication is the term itself. Although often cited as critical to success in a counterinsurgency campaign, there is no consensus on the definition of the term itself.[3] Many of the definitions are too generic or broad to be an effective starting point for planning and discussion. This monograph will not delve into the discourse on the definition, but will accept the doctrinal definition provided in Joint Publication 1-02:

> Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.[4]

While this is also a broad definition, it is the only definition currently accepted by, and published in, military doctrine.

Retired Major General Kevin Bergner, until recently the Chief of Public Affairs for the United States Army, provided clarity to this definition while speaking to a School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) seminar. He added that strategic communication is about aligning actions, images, and words (written in order of importance) that are arranged to achieve a specific

[3] Christopher Paul, *Whither Strategic Communciation? A Survey of Current Proposals and Recommendations.* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), 2. Cited hereafter as Whither Strategic Communication?

[4] Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (*Washington D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2001), 522. Cited hereafter as JP 1-02.

effect.[5] Additionally, Admiral Michael Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has identified that the word strategic causes many to become stuck on the strategic level of war. He argues that the military should first focus on aligning intent with actions and then understanding how the population will receive these actions.[6] By this definition and additional qualifiers, strategic communication is more than either public affairs or information operations, although both are part of it.

Strategic communication is not a cell, organization, working group, or a member of the staff that can be applied unilaterally to solve a problem.[7] It is an interactive and cyclical process that should be integrated with operational planning from the beginning to ensure that communication supports the achievement of the commander's intent.[8] The most critical parts of the process are assessment to determine the effect and effectiveness of the message and adaptation of the message and re-engagement as the environment changes.

Why Communicate in a Counterinsurgency?

Counterinsurgency is essentially a war for the will of the people to accept the legitimacy of the counterinsurgent's governance against an insurgent competing for the same recognition of legitimacy.[9] The side the people perceive as more legitimate due to its actions, policies, strength relative to the adversary, and communications directed at the people will ultimately gain the support of the population. The support of the people is critical to both the insurgent and the

[5] Bergner, Kevin, interview by SAMS Seminar 2, Fort Leavenworth, KS, September 30, 2009. Major General (Retired) Bergner was serving as the U.S. Army Chief of Public Affairs at the time of the interview.

[6] Michael Mullen, "Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 55 (4th Quarter 2009): 2-3. Admiral Mullen is serving as the Chairman of the Joints Chief of Staff at the time of publication.

[7] Mullen, 2.

[8] Defense Science Board, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, January 2008), 11-12. Cited hereafter as DSB Report 2008.

[9] Department of the Army, *Field Manuel 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington D.C.: Army Chief of Staff, 2006), 1-1. Cited hereafter as FM 3-24.

counterinsurgent's ability to conduct operations. The counterinsurgent must convince the people that life under the existing government is more promising than under the insurgency.[10]

However, strategic communication in a counterinsurgency operation occurs in a complex environment that has rendered the old communication models inadequate.[11] It is characterized and affected by culture, speed, interconnectivity, technology, and operational security requirements which make predicting the effects of a message difficult. A properly crafted and delivered message can have a wide and enduring impact or it can get lost in a sea of messages if not delivered at the proper time, to the right audience, and through the appropriate modes. These environmental factors make it difficult for the counterinsurgent to seize the initiative in strategic communication.

Counterinsurgents communicate across several audiences for varying purposes, but must maintain consistent messaging throughout to maximize effectiveness and prevent a loss of credibility. Counterinsurgents engage their domestic audience and their allies to inform the public and maintain or bolster the will of the people and support for the campaign. They engage the international audience to build global support for the counterinsurgency effort and to gain increased international assistance and legitimacy. Counterinsurgents engage the population in the operational area to build support and legitimacy for the host nation government. Finally, counterinsurgents engage the insurgency to demonstrate their commitment to the successful completion of the campaign and convince them that continued resistance is futile.

The counterinsurgent must understand the culture of the people if he is to communicate effectively with the population. He needs to understand the context with which they think and feel if he is to successfully influence the people. Cultural challenges include language (or dialects of the same language), religious beliefs, national history and nationalism, and ideology. These

[10] Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 1-25.

[11] Steven R. Corman, Angela Trethewey, and Bud Goodall, *A 21st Century Model for Communication in the Global War of Ideas: From Simplistic to Pragmatic Complexity* (Arizona State University: Consortium for Strategic Communication, 2007), 3.

are problems in counterinsurgencies in heterogeneous societies, even without a third party actor. Differences in dialect and regional idioms can result in a "say-hear gap" where the audience does not understand a message in the manner intended by the sender.[12] This misunderstanding can create false expectations and add tension to the counterinsurgent's relationship with the people by directly attacking its credibility.

Effective communication and control of the message are important in gaining popular support for the counterinsurgent. The counterinsurgent uses messaging to manage the expectations of the population, particularly with a third party intervener that has a reputation for affluence and success. Counterinsurgent forces need to adroitly manage population expectations to avoid the perception of ineptitude or punishment if the force does not provide the services that the population expects in a short time period, regardless of the cause of the delays.[13] This perception will lead to an erosion of support for the counterinsurgent over time if they fail to carefully manage expectations by clearly communicating both intent and capability.

The speed of modern communications is another reason that effective strategic communication is vital to a counterinsurgency operation. Communication travels at an ever-increasing rate. This has reduced the news cycle to nearly-instantaneous, on-the-battlefield reporting of events. In the current environment of decreasing cost and increasing availability of digital photography and cellular phone technology, anybody can become a member of the media. The counterinsurgent operates in a fishbowl-type environment where every action can be recorded by anyone and posted to the Internet within minutes, or sent via cellular phone instantaneously to any number of users. Insurgents can manipulate these pictures and videos or release them with completely false information to shape the people's image and perception of the

[12] Defense Science Board, *DSB Report 2008,* 13.
[13] Department of the Army, *FM 3-24,* 1-25.

counterinsurgent force. Various Internet applications allow the image to rapidly turn viral and affect a global audience while the counterinsurgent is still deciding to investigate the incident. [14]

A technology-savvy insurgent poses a dilemma for the counterinsurgent force commander who balances between being accurate or immediate with media releases and key leader engagements after a spectacular attack or critical event (the right or "right now" dilemma). The counterinsurgent leader is generally more centralized in his information dissemination approach and takes the time to collect and assess the facts before releasing a statement. This creates an information vacuum that the insurgent is willing and able to exploit, because he understands that the people generally remember the first message on the battlefield. The insurgent is more willing to forgo truthfulness for speed because he also gains the advantage of the message spreading rapidly by word of mouth, which has great influence in many cultures.[15] This is a key reason why counterinsurgent forces must match their actions to their words despite the decentralized nature of operations and the possibility that an isolated subordinate unit, or even individual Soldiers, might act against the stated policy and intent of the force. The counterinsurgent should work to minimize the mismatch in words and actions—known as the "say-do gap"—in order to prevent a loss of legitimacy.[16]

However, an infatuation with technology as the ultimate solution—rather than using a strategy to adopt appropriate technologies—can hamper efforts to achieve desired strategic communication objectives. Western forces often rush to employ emerging communication technologies without first deciding what they want to accomplish and determining the appropriate tools for the desired audience. A force can jump to the conclusion that a coalition-run radio station, YouTube channel, or internet news site is the newest answer to influencing the population without first learning how the people get their news and feel about the information they receive.

[14] The term viral refers to messages, videos, images or other internet content that has the ability to spread rapidly across a variety of communication channels and gains a large following during its lifespan.

[15] Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 1-3, 5-8. Paragraphs 1-12, 1-13, and 5-24.

[16] Defense Science Board, *DSB Report 2008*, 13.

Technology is a powerful tool for both sides, but the first step must be learning about the population and setting communication objectives.

Technology and the demand for information create tension in the communications environment because there are real requirements to maintain the OPSEC of classified and otherwise sensitive information in a counterinsurgency environment. However, the military generally over-classifies documents related to operations and is slow to de-classify and release that information to the media and the public. The over-classification of information can lead to the impression that the military is hiding something and create a lack of trust between the counterinsurgent and the media and the people. This creates a need for balance in OPSEC and engagement to help develop transparency and legitimacy with the people.

What is Initiative in Strategic Communication?

The Army defines initiative as "setting or dictating the terms of action throughout the battle or operation."[17] Although this definition is intended for application in combat operations, it can be modified to apply to strategic communication. Initiative, with respect to strategic communication, is setting or dictating the message throughout the operation or campaign while rendering the adversary's message ineffectual.

Possessing the initiative is critical in strategic communication during counterinsurgency operations because a counterinsurgency is a war of competing ideas or ideologies where the population has a choice of which side to support. Controlling the tone and tempo of the message allows a counterinsurgent force to become pro-active in both its messaging and its operations.

However, there is a perception that the insurgent force generally has the initiative in strategic communication. This is because insurgents are generally less constrained by the facts and concerns for their own legitimacy as they are focused on discrediting the counterinsurgent's

[17] Department of the Army, *Field Manuel 1-02: Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington D.C.: Army Chief of Staff, 2004), 1-100. Cited hereafter as FM 1-02.

ability to govern, maintain security, and concern for the population.[18] Insurgents often twist the facts to create a truth that suits their needs before the counterinsurgent can communicate his version of the truth. Insurgents plan their operations with the purpose of creating the perception of insecurity and are quick to promulgate their message using rumor and new media that give their message a viral effect, often before the counterinsurgent has even prepared its first message. The following statement by an American officer in Iraq highlights the disparity in importance placed upon strategic communication by the two forces:

> We plan kinetic operations and maybe consider adding a public affairs annex. Our adversaries plan information campaigns that exploit kinetic events, especially spectacular attacks and martyrdom operations. We aren't even on the playing field, but Al Qaeda seeks to dominate it because they know their war will be won by ideas.[19]

Unless the counterinsurgent force reverses this trend, it is not likely to wrest the strategic communication initiative from the insurgent.

Methodology

This monograph will utilize a single recent and relevant counterinsurgency case study to demonstrate how a counterinsurgent seized the initiative with respect to strategic communication by adopting a culture of engagement. This technique will demonstrate how the insurgent initially held the initiative and controlled the message. It will then show how the counterinsurgent adapted its organizational culture to seize the initiative in strategic communication. The single case technique allows for control of the key variables of culture, language, history, and geography that would be lost by using case studies from different continents or cultures. This helps to limit variation to the organizational culture of the counterinsurgent (reticence or engagement) and the amount of initiative the counterinsurgent has in strategic communications. The case will show

[18] Galula, David, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice,* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Hailer Publishing, 1964), 14-15.

[19] Richard Halloran, "Strategic Communication," *Parameters* 37, no. 3 (Autumn 2007): 4.

that possession of the communication initiative supports increased operational effectiveness in a counterinsurgency campaign.

The study applied several selection criteria to determine relevance of the case study to ensure that the monograph is applicable to current operations. First, the case had to be either complete or on an apparently irreversible path with respect to strategic communication. Second, the case could not be a recent United States case such as Iraq, Afghanistan, or Vietnam to avoid the emotional responses that those generate, classified information, or the risk that events might change in the current theaters during work on the monograph. Third, the case had to include a period where the insurgent held the initiative in strategic communication and the counterinsurgent was able to seize it after making some changes. A fourth consideration is that it is preferable for the case to occur after the advent of the 24-hour cable news cycle and the spread of the internet, to account for new technology and the global spread of information.

This monograph is not intended to solve the strategic communication concerns for the current counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, but will focus on counterinsurgency in general. Additionally, it is important to note that effective strategic communication requires a true whole-of-government approach. This monograph addresses actions of the entire government of Colombia during the case study, but focuses on providing recommendations for improving the military application of strategic communication.

This monograph will begin with a description of the current communication environment and the challenges that it poses for a counterinsurgent force to exert initiative in strategic communication. The monograph will explain the perceived culture of reticence of the U.S. military and how it affects communication efforts in a counterinsurgency campaign. It will explain the culture of engagement that several key leaders in the military are attempting to instill and the benefits that changes to military culture are expected to produce.

Next, the monograph will present a case study on Colombia's counterinsurgency campaign against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The monograph will

analyze the case to show the benefits of the culture of engagement in strategic communication and assess its effects. The use of Colombia as a case study does present some challenges for this monograph. First, improvement in Colombian strategic communication is not the only reason that the military has seized the initiative from the FARC, but it is significant in supporting this effort. Second, the FARC is not the only insurgent group in Colombia, but the case study focuses on this group because it is clearly the strongest and most influential. Third, the Colombian government published many primary documents published in Spanish only which leads to increased reliance on secondary sources.

Finally, the monograph will suggest implications for application throughout the U.S. military to improve its ability to operate and seize the initiative in strategic communication in support of a counterinsurgency.

The Cultures of Strategic Communication

Communicating in a Culture of Reticence

Some senior Army leaders have argued that the military has a culture of reticence with respect to strategic communication. This means that the military is predisposed to remain silent rather than actively engage the media or the people despite the previously identified conditions of the environment.[20] This reticence stems from a democratic tradition of civilian leadership over the military, law and policy, trust in the military-media relationship, and operational security requirements. This cultural reticence adversely affects the military's willingness and ability to communicate with the people in a counterinsurgency operation, which makes it more difficult to gain their support and to build the sense of legitimacy required for operational success.

The professional military officer understands and accepts the fact that democratic systems place the civilian leadership over the military. This encourages military leaders to remain silent during critical events for fear of getting ahead of the civilian policy makers and

[20] Bergner, interview.

unintentionally forcing their hand with public statements that could be construed as policy or political maneuvering.[21] This desire to remain outside of politics is one of the reasons that the military is one of the last remaining trusted entities in America.[22] Members of the military are generally humble individuals who are more interested in serving the nation than seeing their name in the press. Additionally, peers often look down upon leaders that seek headlines for themselves or their units, as self-aggrandizing.[23] While this reticence may help the military's image domestically, it harms the counterinsurgency efforts in the operational environment, because the population identifies a lack of a message to be a statement of its own.

Law and policy also contribute to the culture of reticence in the U.S. military. The Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 prohibits the military from conducting domestic information campaigns. Every defense appropriations bill since 1951 has carried a restriction against messaging the domestic population except for recruiting purposes. While these limitations may seem to be benign restrictions on the military's ability to engage in a counterinsurgency campaign, damage has come from the interpretations and policies that have sprung from this law. The spread of internet technology and the potential that the domestic audience could be exposed

[21] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 82. Cited hereafter as The Soldier and the State.

[22] Matthew Dowd, interview by SAMS Seminar Two, Fort Leavenworth, KS, November 3, 2009. Mr. Dowd is a political campaign consultant central to the presidential campaigns of George W. Bush. Gallup, Inc, "Americans' Confidence in Military Up, Banks Down," http://www.gallup.com/poll/121214/Americans-Confidence-Military-Banks-Down.aspx, (accessed on November 9, 2009). This poll measured the confidence of the American public in American institutions. The poll showed the 82% of Americans have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the military. Some of the other institutions scored as following: police 59%, organized religion 52%, the presidency 51%, public schools 38%, television news 23%, Congress 17%.

[23] Bergner, interview. Department of the Army, *FM 6-22: Army Leadership: Competent, Confident, and Agile* (Washington, D.C.: Army Chief of Staff, 2006), 4-2 – 4-9. Cited hereafter as FM 6-22. The Army establishes its core values in chapter four of FM 6-22. The Army Values are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Those leaders who actively seek the media spotlight for reasons of personal gain and notoriety may be violating the value of selfless service. However, it is completely acceptable for a leader to seek out the media to support the accomplishment of his unit's mission or to inform the American public on operations.

to an information product have prevented the military from effectively engaging in the operational environment.[24]

Finally, the culture of reticence manifests itself in a poor relationship between the military and the media. Many see the Vietnam War as a period when the media and the military began to lose trust in each other, due to the military's questionable reporting about operational progress and the media's negative portrayal of the military. This historical background leaves military leaders believing that members of the media will approach them with an adversarial mindset and are looking to catch them in the next big story. Furthermore, many military leaders have a perception that when engagements go poorly it will not be underwritten and the officer will face negative consequences on an evaluation, promotion, or command opportunities.[25]

While he does not use the word reticence itself, Lieutenant General Caldwell has identified that the military has four basic assumptions about the media. These assumptions demonstrate the cultural reticence of the U.S. military. First, leaders see the media on the battlefield as an annoyance that distracts them from their job of planning operations and commanding forces in combat. Second, leaders practice avoidance of the media and do not seek out opportunities to engage and tell their unit's account of operations. Third, Caldwell claims that military leaders enter a media engagement with a predisposition to answer only with the facts. While this prevents speculation and a leader talking outside the realm of his direct knowledge and responsibility, it also leads to curt answers, gives an impression that the military

[24] Christopher Paul, interview by SAMS Seminar Two, Fort Leavenworth, KS, October 21, 2009. Dr. Paul, PhD. is an analyst for RAND Corporation specializing in counterinsurgency and strategic communication. See the RAND Corporation at http://www.rand.org/about/people/p/paul_christopher.html for Dr. Paul's biography and a list of related publications.

[25] Bergner, interview. William B. Caldwell IV, "Operating in the Information Domain," (briefing presented to Command and General Staff College students at Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2008), slide 3. Lieutenant General Caldwell has an extensive background in strategic communications based on his previous assignments. These include Commanding General of the 82nd Airborne Division, Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Effects for the Multi-National Force Iraq as the chief spokesman in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Commanding General of the Combined Arms Center, and currently the Commanding General of NATO Training Mission Afghanistan. These are all high profile assignments that require the officer to communicate frequently about unit objectives and actions to diverse audiences across multiple communication channels. See the General Officer Management Office website for LTG Caldwell's resume at https://www.gomo.army.mil/Ext/Portal/Biographies/printall.aspx?goid=350&printobjects=3.

could be hiding information, and prevents a better connection with the intended audience. Fourth, military leaders are inclined to restrict access to members of the media rather than being as transparent as possible.[26]

The military's cultural reticence has tremendous negative effects on strategic communication and overall effectiveness during a counterinsurgency campaign. As identified earlier, the objective of a counterinsurgency is to gain the will and support of the people – domestically, locally, and internationally. Reticence keeps the military from actively engaging these important audiences by ensuring that any actions taken will be reactive in nature. Communication efforts become centralized at higher echelons due to a fear that subordinate leaders and Soldiers will speak off message, release classified information, or embarrass the military. This ensures that the insurgent force is allowed to seize the initiative and control the information environment.

Counterinsurgent forces, particularly third-party interveners, generally have a short window of domestic support to conduct operations. Democratic populations expect short successful campaigns and are not easily motivated to conduct protracted campaigns, particularly as casualties mount and operational objectives and success are not clearly defined or measured. A failure by the military, and of course the civilian leadership, to actively engage the domestic population directly results in declining popular support for the campaign.[27]

The same requirements exist to engage an international audience to maintain international support and legitimacy abroad for the campaign. A failure to engage internationally can potentially result in a loss of coalition partners that provide much needed combat power and resources. At the other extreme, it could lead to the population or government of other states supporting the insurgency.

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[26] Caldwell, "Operating in the Information Domain," slide 3.

[27] Jeffrey Record, *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win*, (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2009) 134-135.

Finally, a counterinsurgent must gain or maintain legitimacy with the population in the area of operations quickly to gain their active or implicit support. This is particularly true if the counterinsurgent force is a third-party intervener in support of a host nation government. Counterinsurgent forces generally have a finite period of time before the people begin to see them as occupiers and not as allies trying to improve their situation. A failure to actively engage the local population, both directly and through the local media, drastically reduces that period of support and will increase the power of insurgent strategic communication efforts.[28]

Towards a Culture of Engagement

The antithesis of the culture of reticence is a culture of engagement. Military leaders of counterinsurgent forces should move towards this if they are to seize the strategic communication initiative from the insurgent. While not defined in military doctrine, Lieutenant General Caldwell again provides insight, by stating that a culture of engagement is characterized by being proactive, innovative, adaptive, leader-driven, and sustainable.[29] Adopting these characteristics amounts to a transition from the defense to the offense and is necessary against an agile and adaptive insurgency. This offensive mindset is critical because a hierarchical organization will generally always fail to outperform a non-hierarchical organization in the communications environment, as each level of the organization seeks to control the message.[30] Adopting this mindset creates leaders at all levels of the force that proactively seek out opportunities to message desired audiences, which will seize the initiative from the insurgent.

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[28] Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 1-24 - 1-25. Paragraphs 1-138 and 1-139 discuss the importance of developing the legitimacy of the host nation and counterinsurgent forces by matching deeds to words. The manual includes the "man on the moon syndrome" that the United States faces in counterinsurgency campaigns. This makes an effective strategic communication campaign even more important to manage expectations and garner support. Fred T. Krawchuk, "Strategic Communication: An Integral Component of Counterinsurgency Operations," *The Quarterly Journal*, (Winter 2006): 36. Krawchuk quotes former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as describing current public affairs as insufficient for the current environment as they are reactive and not attuned to the twenty-four-hour news cycle.

[29] William B. Caldwell IV, Shawn Stroud, and Anton Menning, "Fostering a Culture of Engagement," *Military Review* (September-October 2009): 13.

[30] Dowd, interview.

Counterinsurgent leaders must become proactive in their strategic communication efforts; to adapt a current cliché, they must get "left of the news cycle" if they are going to seize the communications initiative from the insurgent. Leaders accomplish this by changing the mindset from avoidance to seeking out the media, and other opportunities, to speak publicly about their objectives and operations. Leaders cannot just seek domestic or other Western media, but must also engage the local media so they are able to effectively communicate with the local population in the operational area. The proactive counterinsurgent searches for negative coverage of his operations and actively engages the source to correct misinformation in a timely and public manner because of the rate that information can spread.

Counterinsurgent forces are proactive when every Soldier and leader is empowered to become a spokesperson for his particular organization and speaks truthfully and transparently, but within the overall communications theme. They also avoid rote memorization of standard and generic media talking points across the force because this leads the people to believe that leaders are not being transparent and reduces the credibility of the message. The aim of proactive communication is "not everyone speaking in the same voice, but everyone speaking in the same direction" to prevent information fratricide and build legitimacy.[31] Information fratricide occurs when different units and leaders have contradictory messages that reduce the credibility of the counterinsurgent force. Counterinsurgents ensure leaders are capable of speaking in the same direction by integrating communications directly into the planning process to identify potential messages and effects before the execution of operations.

Leaders must also adopt innovative approaches in their messaging efforts to build legitimacy and support across wide audiences. While technology is not the answer on its own, the spread of the internet and technology provide numerous opportunities for the counterinsurgent force that is able to operate out of fixed sites with established networks. The internet provides numerous social networking, picture, and video sharing applications that can be used to bypass

[31] Paul, interview.

the media and engage the population directly, if utilized and publicized effectively. However, to be effective, this will require a change in restrictive website access policies to allow full use of sites like YouTube, Flickr, and Facebook on government computers and networks.

The communications environment is rapidly changing and counterinsurgent forces need to become adaptive throughout their campaigns, if they are to gain the initiative from the insurgent. This requires the mindset that opinion and events will shift and require immediate responses to be able to maintain relevance with the people and counter the insurgency's misinformation campaigns. Messages cannot be driven solely from the operational or strategic level headquarters and applied directly at the tactical level across the entire operational area. This centralized approach makes responses slow and too generic to matter to the local targeted audience. Subordinate leaders must have the authority to tailor messages to their specific area and to seek out the media at the site of critical events so that the counterinsurgent message gets into the environment rapidly and is tailored to local audiences.[32] The counterinsurgent force realizes opportunities and mitigates emerging threats as they arise during a campaign by adjusting his processes to empower subordinate commanders to engage.

The transition to a culture of engagement is inherently a leader-driven process as senior leaders are directly responsible for providing purpose, priority, and objectives to the force.[33] The senior commanders must first set the example for their subordinates by personally conducting engagements to show their subordinate leaders what is expected and important. They should demand transparency across the force to help build trust and mutual respect between the media, civilian leadership, and the people. Commanders must set an appropriate command climate by recognizing that not all engagements will go well and underwrite the honest mistakes of their subordinates to help break the tendency not to engage for fear of repercussions. They must break the cycle of risk-averse decision-making that forfeits the initiative to the enemy and instead seek

[32] Ralph O. Baker, "The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations," *Military Review* (May-June 2006): 16-18.

[33] Caldwell, Stroud, and Menning, 16.

opportunities with carefully-calculated and mitigated risks. Commanders guide this process by providing clearly definable communication objectives and ensuring that the efforts are integrated directly with the planning and execution of operations.

Finally, a culture of engagement needs to be sustainable over time and throughout the depth of the operational area. This means that it should be resourced properly to be effectively integrated into operational planning, rather than as crisis response. The counterinsurgent force develops engagement-minded leaders who are comfortable in communicating the unit message, throughout the width and depth of the professional military education (PME) system, so that they are confident when they are required to communicate in a counterinsurgency campaign.

Adopting a culture of engagement supports the counterinsurgent's efforts to seize the communications initiative from the insurgent because this culture focuses on building relationships and trust with the media, key actors, and the people. This approach lends credibility to the counterinsurgent message and prevents the opposing insurgent message from gaining traction with relevant audiences. This helps to build popular support and provides additional opportunities to engage as the military-media-population relationship improves.

The culture of engagement helps the counterinsurgent communicate with the domestic population directly rather than relying on intermediaries to spread the message for him. This is critical because the media generally carries stories of spectacular attacks and casualties to gain higher ratings rather than good news stories of progress and development in a protracted campaign.[34] Engagement-minded counterinsurgents create opportunities and methods to directly inform desired audiences and key actors about current operations and intentions, regardless of the media's willingness to publish less flashy headlines. This places the counterinsurgent in a better

[34] Burns, interview. Ralph Peters, Presentation during the 2009 Military History Symposium, The U.S. Army and the Media in Wartime: Historical Perspective, Fort Leavenworth, KS, August 27, 2009. Additionally, a reporter with extensive experience covering Operation Iraq Freedom, stated this as well while speaking to CGSC Class 09-01 during a non-attributional media panel as part of the guest speaker program. Caldwell, Stroud, and Menning, 13. The authors also identify that other events in the news environment such as political campaigns, economic crisis, or other domestic concerns may pre-empt war coverage as the campaign continues.

position to influence popular opinion because he is usually seen as a legitimate force with a credible message. This level of transparency can help to sustain domestic support as the people learn why the military is conducting operations and the level of success the operations are having.

The culture of engagement also helps to gain or maintain local support and legitimacy with the people in the area of operations. The local population needs to understand why the counterinsurgent takes certain actions and enacts policies to counteract insurgent misinformation campaigns. Proactive messaging of the local population helps them to understand the levels of success and provides hope to the people. This is critical because the people may initially view the insurgent, rather than the counterinsurgent, as the most legitimate and credible force. Counterinsurgents reverse this trend by proactively engaging the population and by ensuring that their actions match their messages in order to close the say-do gap and build legitimacy and credibility with the people in the operational area.

Colombia and the FARC

Now that the monograph has explained the importance of possessing the initiative in strategic communication during a counterinsurgency, it will examine a case study of how Colombia adopted a culture of engagement to seize the initiative from the FARC. The case study will provide a succinct explanation of the history of the insurgency and the operational environment in Colombia using the operational variables found in U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0 as a framework. Next, the case will identify how the FARC seized the strategic communication initiative from the government and military of Colombia. Then the monograph will outline the Colombian military's professional transformation that increased both communications and operational effectiveness in support of the government's counterinsurgency strategy. Finally, the case study will explain how the government and military successfully seized the initiative through engagement and operational success.

Understanding the Colombian Environment

Physical Environment

The geography of Colombia is important to understanding strategic communication in the government's counterinsurgency campaign because the terrain has an isolating effect for those living in the southeast portion of the country. This reduces the ability of the government and the military to project its authority and generate legitimacy with the rural population. Three parallel ranges of the Andes Mountains divide the country with the vast majority of the population concentrated in cities in the highlands and near the coastal regions. The southeast portion of the country is sparsely populated and characterized by broad plains covered in thick jungle, and the Amazon region.[35]

Political

Colombia is the oldest democracy in South America despite being a complex nation with a long history of violence and political unrest. The country's last civil war, La Violencia from 1948 to 1958, did not "resolve the tensions between those political elites who supported a strong central government and those who supported strong regional government."[36] La Violencia ended when the Liberal and Conservative parties formed the National Front that shared power from 1958–1974. However, this agreement kept many shut out of the political process and lent credibility to the messages of leftist insurgent groups.[37]

In this context of violence, the Cold War brought a rise of leftist movements and the struggle between democracy and communism to Colombia and most of Latin America. Guerrilla groups formed in the ungoverned spaces of the Colombian jungles where the

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[35] Robert D. Ramsey III, *From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008,* Occasional Paper 34, (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 2. Cited hereafter as OP 34.

[36] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 5.

[37] Gabriel Marcella, *Colombia's Three Wars: U.S. Strategy at the Crossroads* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1999), 8. Cited hereafter as Colombia's Three Wars.

Colombian government was unable to project its power or message. The communist bloc funded and supported the leftist groups and the government became a strong ally of the United States and western democracy. Additionally, self-defense paramilitary groups formed to combat the leftist groups, due to government weakness in the rural regions of Colombia. With U.S. aid, the government has successfully defeated or demobilized all but two of the guerilla organizations through a combination of military operations, political reform in the adoption of the 1991 constitution, and peace talks.[38] Despite these successes, the country remains locked in a forty-six year old counterinsurgency campaign aimed at protecting Colombia's democratic process.

Historically, Colombian governance was completely embroiled in a culture of corruption that penetrated Colombia to the highest levels.[39] This corruption began with the vast spread of the narcotics trade in the 1980s as the powerful cartels achieved complicity from law enforcement, the judicial system, and governance through bribery. The corruption even reached as high as a former president. The downfall of the cartels did not end the corruption; it simply shifted the source to the paramilitaries and guerrillas, the new drug players in Colombia. This had the effect of reducing the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the people and the international community, as well as the ability of honest officials to govern or enforce the law ethically.

Military

The two remaining insurgent groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), comprise the greatest military threat to Colombia. The Colombian Communist Party founded the FARC military forces in 1966 under Marxist ideology to defend communist-controlled rural areas in southeast Colombia.[40] The

[38] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 7.

[39] Neal J. Hanley, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, KS, February 9, 2010. Mr. Hanley works in the Joint Reserve Intelligence Connectivity Program. He spent six years serving in Colombia in support of U.S. and Colombian efforts from 1998-2002.

[40] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 7.

FARC is the largest and best equipped of the insurgent groups and has employed a Maoist strategy of protracted people's war aimed at overthrowing the state. Initially it grew slowly, relying on aid from Moscow until the FARC turned to kidnapping and narcotics to fund its rapid growth in the 1980's. At its height, the FARC numbered seventeen-thousand fighters on its roles with a presence in most municipalities across the country.[41]

The ELN is the weaker of the two Marxist organizations, founded in northeast Colombia "in 1964 by university students, liberation-theology-inspired Catholic priests, and oil workers."[42] It has funded operations through narcotics trafficking, kidnapping, and extortion of the oil companies. ELN leaders have repeatedly engaged the government in negotiations that have failed to bring a ceasefire to date. Military operations and demobilization have significantly reduced the ELN's ability to conduct operations and it is no longer a significant threat to the government.

The failure of the government to effectively combat the FARC and ELN resulted in the growth of self-defense and paramilitary organizations raised by the wealthier landowners and narcotics organizations in the rural areas of Colombia. Over time, many of these self-defense groups formed into a cohesive organization, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). This group was initially popular with the people as protectors against the guerillas and the government often overlooked it, because it did not pose a direct threat to the existence of the government. However, the AUC posed an indirect threat to the legitimacy of the government, because it was fulfilling the role of security provider in many municipalities rather than the police or military. While initially effective at providing security, the AUC used brutal tactics against the guerillas, their supporters, and suspected supporters that raised human rights concerns across the

[41] Peter DeShazo, Peter Primiani, and Phillip McLean, *Back from the Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999-2007*, Report of the Americas Program, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), 5. Cited hereafter as Back from the Brink.

[42] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 9.

country. The AUC and other paramilitary organizations committed the worst human rights abuses through the protection of their supporters in the military and police forces.[43]

The legitimate Colombian security forces are composed of the military and the Colombian National Police. The National Police were responsible for securing the major urban areas against the insurgent groups while the military was primarily responsible for external threats. The country has a history of maintaining a weak military focused on external threats to increase civilian control over senior leaders and reduce the threat of a coup. Colombia maintained a largely conscript military with a small core of professional Soldiers that was not capable of securing the population and curbing the narcotics trade in Colombia. National law prohibited conscripted Soldiers, 80 percent of the Army, from deploying to combat areas. These Soldiers secured critical infrastructure while only the remaining 20 percent deployed throughout the country to fight the guerilla groups. This limited deployable strength, almost twenty thousand men in the 1990, prevented the military from securing the rural population.[44] Many military leaders provided at least tacit support to the AUC resulting in the Clinton administration decertifying the entire Colombian military for military aid from 1996–1997 because of human rights concerns.[45]

Economic

The Colombian economy experienced consistently high growth throughout the Uribe administration with the exception of the current economic crisis. Colombia has large petroleum reserves that lead the country's exports and is the focus of foreign investment. The consistent growth has developed an expectation amongst the population of continued prosperity and modernization. However, the economic windfalls have not been equitable across the country,

[43] Peter DeShazo, Johanna Mendelson Forman, and Phillip McLean, *Countering Threats to Security and Stability in a Failing State: Lessons from Colombia*, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009), 8. Cited hereafter as Countering Threats.

[44] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 14.

[45] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 4.

which finds almost half of the population living in poverty and 12 percent of the work force unemployed.[46] Although this represents a tremendous improvement, the economic disparity is centered on the rural farmers, displaced persons, Afro-Colombians, and the indigenous minority.[47] This inequity has created a vulnerable population that is both physically and emotionally isolated from the national government and susceptible to insurgent information and disinformation campaigns.

Along with the steadily growing legal economy, there is a vast uncounted market based on the narcotics trade. While the value of cocaine and heroin sales is impossible to measure perfectly, some experts believe that they generate sales as high as five-to-six hundred million dollars that bypass the tax system and provide support to the insurgencies.[48]

Social

Over 70 percent of Colombians live in the major cities in the northwestern portion of the country while the jungles in the southeast are nearly unpopulated. Government services focus on the urban areas, while the rural areas receive very limited support from the government.[49] The concentration of the population has resulted in increasing levels of education with 90 percent literacy and almost 100 percent of youth completing their primary level education. This relatively high level of education, combined with a relatively low median age, yields a bulge of educated youth and young adults.[50] This group generally expects increased opportunity and, when it is not available, is more likely to turn to separatist movements.[51]

Additionally, Colombia has a large diaspora that is centered in the United States and Spain, but spreads throughout Europe. This is an influential group, which has actively

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[46] Central Intelligence Agency, "Colombia," The World Fact Book, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/co.html#top (accessed March 02, 2010).

[47] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 45.

[48] Marcella, *Colombia's Three Wars*, 16.

[49] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 2-3.

[50] Central Intelligence Agency, "Colombia," The World Fact Book, (accessed March 02, 2010).

[51] Misagh Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of Iran, Nicaragua and the Philippines*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 94-97.

championed the Colombian cause to the international community and increased awareness of the campaign. Colombia's strong pop culture is represented in this diaspora and it has been used to generate awareness and support amongst the international youth.[52]

Infrastructure

Colombian investment in infrastructure centers on the major cities and the petroleum industry. Only 15 percent of the country's roads are paved which, when combined with poor security, seriously reduces the ability of the government to communicate effectively with the rural population and does not adequately promote trade amongst the cities. The problem of limited and poor roads is especially pervasive in the southern jungle region of the country. The urban areas have sufficient infrastructure to provide quality services to the people, but the shortfall remains the rural minority. Combined with their isolation from the government and economic disparity, this makes the rural population extremely vulnerable to insurgency and less likely to support the national government.[53]

Information

Colombia has a well-developed information structure centered on a free and independent press that allows the people to become well informed about national and international events. As of September 2009, Colombia has almost twenty-one million internet users with forty-six percent penetration of the country. This number is growing rapidly as is the number of broadband and mobile internet users.[54] The information structure also contains almost five-hundred radio stations and sixty television stations that reach the majority of the population. Along with the increasing internet penetration, the population is very interconnected through a wide

[52] Geoffrey B. Demarest, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, KS, February 24, 2010. Dr. Demarest, PhD., is a Colombia expert with the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, KS.

[53] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 2-4.

[54] *Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics*, http://www.internetworldstats.com/sa/co.htm (accessed March 3, 2010).

telecommunications system with only 15 percent of the population using land-line telephones, but 90 percent communicating through the cellular phone network.[55] This information structure provides the government the ability to message a large portion of the population rapidly through multiple communication channels, but the rural population is still largely isolated and does not benefit from this system.

The FARC Seizes the Communications Initiative

The FARC transitioned to guerrilla warfare as it grew in "a vacuum of government security and institutional presence in the more remote areas of the countryside."[56] The FARC used this period to develop its organization and support areas in the remote jungles amongst the sparse population. The organization controlled the message at this time through force, a lack of government presence, and a popular leftist ideology built on social reforms. Cocaine trafficking became a major business in the late 1980s and Colombia became the center of the drug war. This preoccupied the security forces and allowed the FARC to grow rapidly and increase their influence in the countryside due to the increased revenue and recruiting as it began to enter the drug trade at various stages of production.

The FARC grew so rapidly in the 1990s that it attempted to transition to mobile warfare against the government.[57] Initially, the FARC developed its influence with the population through its actions by attacking infrastructure, isolated police units, political intimidation, and assassination to show the people that the government could not secure the countryside. FARC fronts conducted a focused kidnapping campaign along the roads to disrupt travel, extort families for ransom money, and create the fear that nobody was safe. By 1995, the FARC had fronts in 58 percent of Colombia's municipalities, despite an inability to gain traction in the major urban

[55] Central Intelligence Agency, "Colombia," The World Fact Book, (accessed March 02, 2010).
[56] George H. Franco, "Their Darkest Hour: Colombia's Government and the Narco-Insurgency," *Parameters* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 84. Cited hereafter as Their Darkest Hour.
[57] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 26.

areas, while 25 percent of the municipalities had no police force.[58] This expanded presence allowed the FARC to replace the government in many of the remote areas of Colombia while the major urban areas saw little direct effects of the insurgencies. The FARC communicated its Marxist ideology with the people through clandestine radio stations and internationally through its web site as the internet emerged.[59] The FARC never earned the support of the population with these brutal tactics, but their operational success highlighted the fact that the government could not secure the countryside and dictated the strategic communication message.

The presidency of Ernesto Samper (1994–1998) represented a dark period for Colombian military and government strategic communication against the FARC. President Samper was embroiled in controversy almost immediately upon his election, "when it was discovered that his political campaign had received contributions from the Cali drug cartel."[60] This controversy and the human rights issues surrounding the paramilitaries and the Colombian Army resulted in the Clinton administration decertifying the military for aid in the drug war and a loss of moral legitimacy amongst the population.

Additionally, when Colombia did receive American aid, it was clearly allocated for counter-narcotics operations and forces and the Colombians were not allowed to use it for their counterinsurgency campaign. This created both a false division of effort and a confused message to the people, as the guerillas were entrenched in the narcotics trade. This further prevented Colombia from focusing their communication efforts and provided the FARC the opportunity to mass guerrilla fronts and increase attacks against the National Police and isolated military units. The FARC successfully attacked several Army and National Police outposts, which had limited tactical influence on the campaign, but further turned the communication initiative to the side of

[58] DeShazo, Forman, and McLean, *Countering Threats*, 9.

[59] Juan Manuel Padilla Cepeda and Juan Carlos Correa, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, KS, December 7, 2009. Both men are Colombian Army officers with extensive combat experience against the FARC. The FARC homepage, http://www.farc-ep.org, has been taken offline.

[60] Franco, *Their Darkest Hour*, 86.

the FARC.[61] The Samper administration failed to develop a culture of engagement and lost the initiative in strategic communication due to its lack of political legitimacy, inability to secure the countryside, drastically increasing violence, and numerous successful complex attacks by the FARC.

The inability of the military to secure the countryside and the FARC's overwhelming success during the Samper administration brought President Andres Pastrana to office on a peace platform, declaring "change begins today."[62] He promised to increase the legitimacy of the government and end the insurgency through negotiation. However, the FARC held both the operational and the communication initiative due to their successful campaign against the security forces and the isolation of the rural population from the government. During this time, the Army could travel anywhere in the country in force, but it had to return to its garrisons after short operations and could not maintain a continuous presence amongst the rural population. The people realized this and were not willing to support the military and government, regardless of the civil affairs projects or messaging, because the FARC always returned as the Army left. [63] Additionally during this time, the AUC reduced the legitimacy of the military and government by providing the security for many of the isolated regions and committing far more human rights violations than the FARC, which the security forces could not, or chose not to, prevent. The rapidly increasing rate and pervasiveness of the violence caused many Colombians to say, "Pastrana is the president of Colombia by day, and the mayor of Bogota by night."[64] This lack of presence prevented the military from practicing engagement with its most critical audience, the domestic population.

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[61] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 26-31. The FARC ambushed an Army patrol securing an oil pipeline in southern Colombia in April 1996 killing or wounding all forty-nine members of the patrol. In August 1996 the FARC conducted twenty-two simultaneous attacks in twelve different departments against police and military targets. An eight hundred man FARC force overran the outpost of an infantry company at Las Delicias as part of these attacks. On March 1, 1998, 450 FARC guerrillas successfully ambushed three companies of a mobile brigade near El Billar killing sixty-two and capturing forty-three Soldiers.

[62] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 43.

[63] Cepeda and Correa, interview. Ramsey, *OP 34*, 75.

[64] Hanley, interview.

These conditions meant that Pastrana was pursuing his "peace at all costs" initiative from a position of weakness. The FARC understood and exploited their strength by demanding a demilitarized zone (*zona de despeje*) to facilitate the negotiations. Previous presidents had granted concessions, in the form of the 1991 constitution, to successfully bring the M-19 guerrilla organization to negotiations and demobilization. President Pastrana approved the *despeje* on June 15, 1997, effectively ceding forty-two thousand square kilometers (an area the size of New England, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware) to the FARC for a ninety-day period. During the peace process he renewed the *despeje* eleven times despite evidence that the FARC was only using the *despeje* to coordinate increased operations closer to Bogota.[65]

These continued operations from the *despeje* caused Pastrana to realize that the FARC had no intention to reach a negotiated settlement with the government. Despite the Colombian military commander presenting evidence of the FARC staging attacks from the *despeje*, the government peace commissioner downplayed this publicly.[66] This failure to practice engagement and propagate the message that the FARC was violating the conditions of the *despeje* further prevented the government from seizing the initiative. The FARC, however, attempted to use the combination of its successful operations and ability to force the creation of the *despeje* to gain international legitimacy as a lawful combatant organization. The failure of the *despeje* and the peace process caused Pastrana's approval rating to drop to only 22 percent after one year in office and the resignation of the Minister of Defense in protest of the policy. [67]

The Samper and Pastrana administrations saw the FARC seize the communication initiative due to its use of force, lack of governance and security in the countryside, and a sense of legitimacy due to the creation of the *despeje*. However, the FARC never gained the support of the people due its brutal tactics. Although the FARC still maintained its claims to Marxist ideology, it had practically abandoned the popular cause for the narcotics trade. The government

[65] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 8-9.
[66] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 54.
[67] DeShazo, Primiani, and McLean, *Back from the Brink*, 9.

did achieve one strategic communication success during this period when the United States labeled the group a terrorist organization in 1997.[68] The inability of the military and government to secure the environment and build popular support in the 1990s led to the realization that change must occur.

Transformation and Professionalization of the Military

The failure of the peace process and the lack of operational success led to President Pastrana and the senior military leadership implementing Plan Colombia to transform the military. A triad of influential general officers served as the catalysts to the change process in the military, which has been instrumental in changing the nature of operations and strategic communication in the Colombian military. These three general officers served as the "brain trust" that guided the development and implementation of improved counterinsurgency campaign plans and institutional change in the organization and tactics of the military. Their influence was widespread and felt throughout the military for many years as it transformed to meet the FARC.[69]

The artificial barrier drawn between the counterinsurgency and counternarcotics efforts was a fundamental flaw in the Colombian military campaign against the FARC. This was a false distinction because the guerrilla groups were deeply involved in the narcotics trade as a source of funding. The United States drew this distinction as a precondition for aid to the Colombian security forces to conduct counternarcotics operations only because the policy, at that time, was that the United States did not conduct counterinsurgency operations. This resulted in the creation

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[68] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 7.

[69] Thomas Marks, *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for "Democratic Security,"* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, July 2005), 6. General Fernando Tapias Stahelin – Commanding General, Joint Command, General Jorge Enrique Mora Rangel – Commanding General, Colombian Army, and Major General Carlos Alberto Ospina Ovalle – Commanding General, 4th Division. These three individuals served in the most senior positions and brought officers like them in to succeed them as they progressed and eventually retired. Mora followed Tapias as the CG Joint Command. Ospina left division command and served in key Army level staff positions – Director of Operations and Inspector General – before becoming the CG of the Army and the CG, Joint Command in 2003. Thomas Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, January 2002), 12. The 4th Division was critical to the campaign at this point because its area of operations was the center of FARC combat strength and financial power as a narcotics producing region.

of counternarcotics units that received American funding and equipment, especially helicopters, while the Army forces did not. Removing the unnatural distinction between counterinsurgency and counternarcotics in Colombia allowed the military to gain access to much needed military equipment that modernized the capability of units and greatly increased mobility through the purchase of American helicopters.

The Colombian Army maintained a garrison mentality, rather than engagement, as it occupied many small and scattered outposts across the country and the FARC increased its operations in an attempt to transition to maneuver warfare. This kept the Army from providing security in the remote areas of Colombia and engaging the population. In 1999, General Mora required the Army's commanders to prepare their units for combat and relieved those that were not able to meet the increased operational tempo.[70]

Colombian law prevented draftees with high school diplomas from conducting combat operations. This left only a small core of professional military units in the Mobile Brigades (BRIM) and the Counterguerilla Battalions (BCG) to actively fight the FARC and provide security in the rural areas.[71] Plan Colombia addressed the force structure of the Army by increasing both the end strength and the ratio of professional Soldiers to draftees within the military in order to increase total deployable combat power to over fifty-three thousand Soldiers.[72] Additionally, the Army created a Special Forces Brigade and a Counternarcotics Brigade (BRCNA) to increase mobility and deployable combat power in the army. These structural changes gave the Army the ability to generate a continuous presence and actively engage the population.

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[70] Thomas Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, 9-12.

[71] Thomas Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, 13. The standard Colombian division included three draftee brigades composed of three battalions and a BCG each. Only the forty-seven BCG's and three BRIM's were real warfighting units in the Colombian Army in 1999.

[72] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 70-71. Plan 10,000 was a three year plan that aimed to replace ten thousand high-school graduate regular Soldiers who were not deployable with professionals who could be deployed to fight the guerrillas. Each division activated a BRIM of professional Soldiers and the 5th Division activated a Mountain Battalion.

Along with increasing end strength and improving force structure, the military initiated a process of increasing the quality of its forces through training of combat units. The Army Tactical Retraining Center (CERTE) provided a one-month training program to prepare all units to return to combat operations. The program began by conducting extensive training on human rights and psychological operations before transitioning to individual and small unit collective training exercises. The training program ended with culminating field training exercises that incorporated all of the knowledge taught previously.[73] The training center developed lethal combat units that understood the importance of treating the people respectfully and communicating with them in support of a short, three-month operations cycle before recycling back through leave and training.

The Army also focused on developing its war-fighting and communication abilities by improving its PME system and the development of a professional Non-Commissioned Officer Corps. It created the National Education Training Center and the National Training Center to compensate for the increased number of professional Soldiers in the Army.[74] The military created a PME system similar to the U.S. military whose curriculum centered on small unit leadership, counterinsurgency education, and integration of combat-lessons-learned into operations, as well as an increased focus on "human rights instruction, information warfare, and joint and special operations."[75] This training is partially responsible for a tremendous drop in death and forced disappearances by the military from the mid to late 1990s.[76] The Colombian Army also received significant military aid from the United States and allies in the form of PME that allowed some of the most competent officers to study abroad. These education and training

[73] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 62.

[74] Thomas Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, 14.

[75] Cepeda and Correa, interview. Thomas Marks, "A Model Counterinsurgency: Uribe's Colombia (2002-2006) vs FARC," *Military Review* (March-April 2007): 51.

[76] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 10. In 1993, the security forces were responsible for 54% of the civilian deaths and forced disappearances in Colombia. Those numbers began to turn around in 1995 as the military was responsible for 16% of attacks while paramilitaries and the guerillas increased. By 1998, the security forces were responsible for only 2.7% of the attacks while the paramilitaries committed 78% of attacks and the FARC 21.3%.

initiatives developed a very professional NCO and officer corps for the Colombian Army that understood the nature of the campaign and the importance of strategic communication.

Colombia Seizes the Initiative

The 2002 election brought President Alvaro Uribe Velez to office at a strategic inflection point for Colombia. The peace process had failed under Pastrana's peace at all cost approach, the military had transformed itself into a professional force capable of fighting the FARC on the battlefield, and the people desired security and peace. Uribe published his Democratic Security and Defence Policy with the clearly defined objective of bringing security to the people of Colombia through the spread of the rule of law.[77] This policy clearly communicated a clear transition in priority for the Colombian government toward internal security.[78] Although the process has not been perfect, President Uribe and the military leadership have nearly guided the country to victory and have completely seized the initiative in strategic communication over the FARC. Colombia seized the strategic communication initiative because the military and political leadership spoke in the same direction with clear objectives and delivered on their promises. To achieve this, Colombia communicated to four audiences: domestic, enemy forces, supporting international, and opposing international.

Communication with the domestic population has been a leader-driven process and is the most important for building the government's legitimacy and a sense of nationalism amongst Colombians. President Uribe communicated the importance of solidarity with the government and security to build support for the government and security forces.[79] He supported the emergence of nationalism by calling on the Colombian people to unite to fight the guerilla groups

[77] Alvaro Uribe Velez, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy.* (Bogota: Republic of Colombia, 2003), 12-13.

[78] International Crisis Group, *Colombia: President Uribe's Democratic Security Policy.* Latin American Report 6, (Bogota: International Crisis Group, November 13, 2003), 1.

[79] Alvaro Uribe Velez, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy.* 6.

themselves rather than relying on the United States to provide military forces.[80] Uribe matched his words of collective action for security to his actions by imposing a war tax on the wealthy to fund continued military growth and transformation, as well as operations against the FARC. This tax made the war more tangible to the wealthy and urban citizens who were geographically separated from the conflict being fought in the jungles and countryside and communicated the government's commitment to success.

Uribe further communicated, and delivered on, his campaign pledges to increase transparency and human rights in order to build domestic support in the counterinsurgency campaign. Colombian law did not hold the military legally responsible for crimes committed during the execution of their duties until Uribe changed the law to make the military accountable for its actions. Although this resulted in some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) filing human rights violation allegations after most Colombian Army operations, it provided increased transparency and a reduction in human rights violations by the military.[81] Uribe further communicated his commitment to improve the human rights condition in Colombia by purging both the government and the military of any leaders with ties to the paramilitary groups which were responsible for the majority of civilian murders and kidnappings by 1995.[82] The military also proactively communicated the humanitarian threat to the people caused by the FARC's increased use of landmines to protect coca fields and base camps and increased use of kidnapping as a fundraising approach.

The military has developed a very innovative and adaptive campaign to build the popular support of their efforts to secure Colombia using both traditional and new media channels of

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[80] Hanley, interview.

[81] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 11-12. The security forces were protected for "crimes 'committed in active service' and 'in connection with their service' that would be tried under the Penal Military Code" and not civil authority. On page 121, Ramsey states that President Uribe supported his commanders, but demanded results and held them accountable in public fashion to include Ministers of Defense, commanders of the military, and the Army. Alvaro Uribe Velez, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, 18-19. Uribe pledged increased transparency of government actions and that any human rights violations by the security forces would be punished.

[82] Ramsey, *OP 34*, 10.

communication. The Army has developed commercials depicting their units in training missions to show that they are a professional and capable force to defend the country against the FARC. The Army also has a series of commercials depicting the military as national heroes, showing young Soldiers and junior leaders pledging their lives to the defense of Colombia and the people, and stating why they serve in the Army. The Army shows these videos on television, as well as making them available on the internet.[83] Additionally, the military released a video of green-tinted gun-tape footage taken from an Air Force gunship engaging a FARC column marching through the countryside in the dark and then an Army unit's first-light air assault to clear the area and gather intelligence. Despite being very graphic, the public loved the video because it showed the military having operational success against the country's greatest threat and provided a feeling of increased security.[84] These uses of video and the internet have demonstrated both innovation and adaptation in the military to engage the Colombian people have increased the population's support for their military.

The military had to become adaptive to communicate effectively with the rural population in the areas most affected by the FARC violence. While television commercials and internet videos are an effective way to communicate with the urban citizens, they are not very effective in reaching the people who live in the countryside and jungles where the infrastructure is not in place. Also, written products are not the best way to communicate with the rural population due to the lower literacy rates. The military communicated with this important segment of the population through portable radio stations and ensured that they controlled the message by systematically locating and destroying the FARC's clandestine radio stations that were effective at reaching the people and spreading misinformation.[85] Then the military dropped leaflets over the rural villages that used powerful images intended to build support for the military

[83] Cepeda and Correa, interview. The Colombian Army has posted the recruitment videos on both its YouTube channel and its homepage. http://www.youtube.com/user/EjercitoNacionalCol , http://www.ejercito.mil.co/index.php?idcategoria=113867

[84] Demarest, interview.

[85] Cepeda and Correa, interview.

and government even if the people could not read the accompanying text. Finally, the increased size of the professional military allowed the forces to develop a relationship and presence amongst the people.

Colombia has also been successful in strategic communication with its domestic population because it was proactive and did not ignore, or attempt to hide, its operational failures and the bad news stories that will occur during a protracted campaign. Colombia also took timely action to resolve the issues to prevent the situation from worsening or reoccurring. This was most obvious as the military removed key leaders, to include the Commanding General of the Army, for ties to the paramilitary groups or for setting a climate that allowed human rights abuses to occur. When the Army accidentally engaged the wrong target and civilians died, the military conducted an immediate investigation, apologized for the mistake, and then held the negligent leaders accountable for their failure to safeguard the population.[86] These rapid and transparent responses to operational failures maintained the goodwill and support of the population.

The president and the military have also been very successful in communicating to their internal enemies, particularly the FARC. Uribe has maintained a clear and consistent message from his campaign through his second term. He used multiple communication channels to state his intent to use the military to defeat the FARC, but continuously reinforced his willingness to negotiate and reintegrate the guerillas into society.[87] The strongest strategic communication effort has been the relentless pursuit of the FARC to match Uribe's stated policies while offering a demobilization process. President Uribe enacted the Justice and Peace Law as a means to facilitate demobilization of the AUC and the guerrilla groups through reduced sentences in

[86] Demarest, interview. In February 2009, a newly created BRIM mistakenly attacked an empty elementary school and house next door resulting in damage to the buildings and one civilian wounded.

[87] Demarest, interview. Virginia M. Bouvier, *New Hopes for Negotiated Solutions in Colombia*, Working Paper, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace , September 25, 2007), 9, 15-20. Ms. Bouvier describes President Uribe's willingness to release FARC prisoners at French President Sarkozy's request, the government facilitating ransom payments for some of the FARC's economic hostages while declaring 2007 the "Year of Military Rescue Operations." International Crisis Group, *Ending Colombia's FARC Conflict: Dealing the Right Card*, Latin American Report 30, (Bogota: International Crisis Group, March 26, 2009),1. The ICG identifies this as an early goal of the Uribe administration, but that military successes may have reduced his willingness to negotiate.

exchange for a full confession of crimes by the surrendering guerrilla.[88] This success in strategic communication has effectively targeted FARC recruiting and resulted in increased guerrilla defections.

This policy has led to the demobilization and re-integration of almost fourteen thousand members of the FARC since 2002.[89] The Ministry of Defense (MoD) has increased the effectiveness of the Justice and Peace Law by creating videos of the former guerillas to persuade their former comrades to return to the state by telling about their positive experience in demobilizing. The MoD shows these videos as television commercials and posts them on the internet for current and potential guerrilla recruits to see as a means of countering FARC disinformation campaigns.[90] Additionally, the military uses air dropped and manually delivered leaflets to persuade guerillas to demobilize and to explain the process. These efforts have also resulted in the demobilization of the AUC, a majority of the ELN, and supported a general reduction in violence nationwide.

The Colombian strategic communication efforts to influence friendly international audiences have been successful in increasing the legitimacy of the government and support for the counterinsurgency campaign. Communication with allies by the government and the military has been instrumental in gaining additional financial support for security force development and preventing the recognition of the FARC as a legitimate political participant in Colombia. Uribe has successfully re-framed the conflict to remove the artificial division between the FARC's terrorism and the narcotics trade. As part of the strategic communication campaign, he has mobilized a large diaspora that is centered in the United States and key European countries—

[88] Virginia M. Bouvier, *New Hopes for Negotiated Solutions in Colombia*, 21-26. Ms. Bouvier provides a detailed description of the demobilization process for the paramilitaries and the Justice and Peace Law. Alvaro Uribe Velez, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, 6.

[89] Ministry of Defense, *Desmovilizacion Estadisticas*, http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/index.php?page=423&PHPSESSID=5c0ea9887c721c1d0f4f1e57b7f2ce02. The MoD provides an excel spreadsheet with cumulative and periodic demobilization of guerillas and paramilitaries by group, province, and security agency that processed the individual.

[90] The MoD has published videos of demobilized FARC guerillas speaking to their former comrades on its Youtube channel at http://www.youtube.com/user/MindefensaColombia#p/search/0/AeFDn0tW4ag.

Spain and France—and includes influential members of pop culture to communicate the legitimacy of the Colombian security forces and the terrorism of the FARC.[91]

Uribe has used the group Verdad Colombia to address the human rights concerns of Colombia's allies and to counter the NGOs that bring lawsuits after almost every military operation. The group is a coalition of twenty-two NGOs in Colombia that are dedicated to advancing democracy and countering disinformation in the conflict. It represents a wide array of interests to include hostage-taking, landmine use, social justice, and drug trafficking. [92]

The military has supported strategic communication to allied nations by conducting educational exchanges of its officers and by sending the Commanding General of the Army to speak to the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College about the successes of Operation Check, a high-profile hostage rescue operation. These exchanges have helped to foster professional relationships amongst the armies and have further spread the message about Colombian efforts. Additionally, the military published *The Hyper Cartel* (*El Gran Cartel*) in 2004 to communicate to the world the true nature of the FARC as a narco-terrorist organization and its effects on the country.[93]

While Uribe has not successfully swayed the international community that opposes Colombian operations against the FARC, he has directly engaged them with a consistent message that has minimized their effects. Venezuela is the principal state that opposes Colombian actions and Uribe has made it clear that President Chavez must not support legitimacy for the FARC or provide material assistance in the conflict. Uribe has engaged Chavez at numerous forums to include the meeting of the Organization of American States and in the press.[94]

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[91] Demarest, interview.

[92] Demarest, interview. Verdad Colombia website translated by Google is found at http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=es&tl=en&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.verdadcolombia.org%2F.

[93]Demarest, interview. The English version of the book is available online for those interested in learning more about the FARC at http://www.ejercito.mil.co/index.php?idcategoria=148672.

[94] Demarest, interview.

Colombia has successfully seized the strategic communication initiative from the FARC during the Uribe administration because both the military and the civilian leadership understand the importance of engagement with their various stakeholders simultaneously. An example of this success is the government's integrated response to the operational successes of 2008 that have seemed to generate irreversible momentum for the Colombian government. In March 2008, the Colombian military conducted a cross-border raid of a FARC camp in Ecuador that killed Raul Reyes, a key senior leader, which also provided a wealth of intelligence found on laptop computers. On July 2nd, the Army conducted Operation Check, a high-profile hostile rescue of American contractors and a former presidential candidate.

This operation displayed the increased professionalism and capability of the military, but its greatest effect occurred on July 20, 2008. A private citizen started a facebook movement to organize a rally and build support against the FARC.[95] Uribe was also planning a rally to celebrate the rescue of the hostages and understood the importance of July 20th as Colombia's national day to hold the rally. July 20, 2008, was particularly important because it fell on a Sunday which is a day that many cities close streets off to vehicles and large numbers of people are out walking and socializing already. Uribe planned multiple large rallies to occur simultaneously across Colombia as well as in Madrid and Paris. He strengthened support for these rallies by including key Colombian music artists to generate a larger crowd filled with "No Mas" (No More) signs and shirts provided by the facebook movement. Uribe personally attended the rally in Leticia, which is strategically located in southeastern Colombia near the borders of Brazil and Peru. The president of Brazil attended the same rally and signed a mutual defense treaty with Colombia that day. These rallies mobilized millions of people and provided a clear

[95] Oscar Morales started the facebook page One Million Voices Against FARC on January 4, 2008 to build international support against the FARC. http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/onemillionvoices?ref=ts.

strategic communication of victory to Colombia.[96] The popular support for the Colombian government has not faltered since these rallies.

Findings

While this monograph has only studied a single case study of strategic communication in a counterinsurgency campaign, there are six salient findings that appear to emerge in Colombia. The first lesson is that a well-developed strategy and operational results are important to the ability to seize the strategic communication initiative from the insurgent. President Pastrana had a popular message of peace with the FARC that was initially well received by the people of Colombia, however, it was not based on a feasible strategy given the security situation in the 1990s and the military was not capable of providing security. In contrast, President Uribe focused on providing security to the people first, using the newly transformed military and local forces, and then bringing the guerrillas to the negotiating table. This approach grounded his strategic communication in more tangible and visible results for the people.

Second, on its own accord strategic communication is not the decisive tool in a counterinsurgency campaign. By studying Colombia, the lesson appears to be that strategic communication shapes the environment in the context of ongoing operations. Strategic communication in Colombia did not become effective until it supported operations. It supports the overall campaign and cannot be the campaign.

Third, Colombia appears to show that strategic communication campaigns that are both innovative and adaptive support the counterinsurgent in seizing the initiative from the insurgent. The government and military appropriately used emerging technologies to communicate with key audiences and provide increased understanding of the campaign through the use of video and vivid images. Additionally, Colombia adapted its approaches to the audience, the environment, and levels of success to increase its communication effectiveness.

[96] Demarest, interview.

Fourth, in Colombia the counterinsurgent was able to seize the initiative by maintaining a proactive and consistent message that supported consistent operations. Colombian leaders worked hard to close the "say-do gap" and this appears to have been very effective in controlling the message. The words of the government matched the images it released of the campaign as well as the actions that the government and Army took to combat the FARC. The message remained consistent at all levels of government and through the military.

Fifth, Colombia employed a leader-driven process to seize the strategic communication initiative from the FARC. President Uribe and the senior military have set the communications tone for the government and have aligned their words with their actions. The senior leaders have become the public faces of the campaign and have held subordinates to meeting high standards.

The sixth lesson to come out of this case study is that Colombia made its transition to a culture of engagement sustainable by corresponding changes in its education and training system. The Army modernized its PME to include instruction on information warfare as well as its counterinsurgency and small unit tactics. The modernized PME also supported the development of a professional NCO corps that facilitated the transition to a culture of engagement. Finally, the Army created a training center for its operational units that included information operations and human rights into its program of instruction and field training exercises.

Conclusion

Based on the experiences of Colombia, the U.S. Army should work to develop a culture of engagement to assist its strategic communication efforts in counterinsurgency operations. Although it has made great strides in improving strategic communication since the early years of the ongoing counterinsurgency campaigns, there is still significant work to do to achieve a true engagement-minded force. Senior leaders must recognize that strategic communication is a leader-driven process and embrace it if the Army is going to seize the initiative from the Islamic extremists that it faces in combat today.

If a change to a culture of engagement is to be sustainable, then the first place to begin any cultural transformation in the Army is through the professional military education (PME) system. The Army currently waits until an officer is in the middle of his career to begin formal education on communication and this is focused solely on preparing for a media interview. This training occurs too late in an officer's career and lacks adequate depth to be effective. The Army should immediately incorporate rank-appropriate elements of communication theory and practical application across the breadth of the entire PME system, to include NCOs and warrant officers. This evolutionary process will develop communication proficiency over the length of a leader's career, commensurate with the growth of responsibilities, and result in effective cultural change.

While the evidence presented in this case study does not reference a change in Colombian military doctrine, the second avenue for cultural change lies in the Army's doctrinal publications. The Combined Arms Center's *Army Leader Development Strategy*, published in November 2009, only implies the value of communication to external audiences in the current operational environment. The strategy fails to explicitly discuss communication and engagement as a key leader competency for the Army or how to develop it under the current system. The Army's current leadership manual includes communication as one of the core leader competencies that it desires in Army leaders. However, the manual only discusses this in terms of internal communication with subordinates, peers, and superiors. Only in the chapter on strategic leadership does the manual begin to address external communication as a leader competency.[97] Because this mindset is insufficient for counterinsurgency operations, the Army should revise the

[97] Department of the Army, *FM 6-22.* FM 6-22 explains the basic leader competencies for direct through strategic leaders in part three of the manual. Chapter 7 describes communication as a leader competency beginning on page 7-14 as someone who listens actively, states goals for action, and ensures shared understanding. These are all described with respect to internal unit communication. Chapter 11 describes organizational level leadership and describes communication as ensuring shared understanding by using the staff as a communications tool and using persuasion to build teams and consensus on page 11-4. The paragraph on building teams and consensus makes reference to multinational partners and the socio-political environment, but the tone of the paragraph is decidedly internal communications. Chapter 12 on strategic leadership is the only section of the manual that directly addresses the importance of communicating with external audiences in the section titled leading that begins on page 12-2.

communication focus of both documents to develop leaders at all levels that are engagement-minded and understand the importance of strategic communication.

The third area to help the Army develop a culture of engagement is in the operational force. Leaders can build communication tasks into home station and combat training center (CTC) training exercises to develop the ability of unit leaders at all echelons to engage the local population. Mission readiness exercises at the CTCs provide the Army the ability to develop this skill due to their focused resources and the unit's theater-specific training for an upcoming deployment. Units in the operational force can also develop leaders who are more comfortable with engaging key leaders or community organizations by focusing on the local area around their active duty post or the leader's hometown. This approach allows leaders to practice communication in a much friendlier environment than when they are deployed overseas speaking through translators to leaders from another culture. Additionally, this approach can generate interest and the support of the community in the unit and its actions that may generate lasting positive relationships between the U.S. population and the Army. This will develop leaders who are proactive, innovative, and adaptive at communicating their messages to an audience rather than leaders who simply wait for a senior headquarters command message for rote memorization and ineffectual recitation to the media.

By beginning with change in these three key areas, the Army can significantly reduce the time it takes to alter organizational culture and install a culture of engagement across the force. The Army already has engagement-minded senior leaders including General Petraeus and Lieutenant General Caldwell to champion the need for cultural change and overcome the institutional reticence. If the Army truly adopts a culture of engagement, it will increase its effectiveness at strategic communication and thus its operational effectiveness in conducting a counterinsurgency campaign.

APPENDIX A

Glossary of Terms

AUC - United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia)*

BCG – Counter-guerrilla Battalion

BRCNA – Counter-Narcotics Brigade *(Brigada Contra el Narcotrafico)*

BRIM – Mobile Infantry Brigade

CERTE – Army Tactical Retraining Center

CGSC – Command and General Staff College

COLAR – Colombian Army

COLMIL – Colombian Military

CTC – Combat Training Center

DoD – Department of Defense (United States)

DSB – Defense Science Board

ELN – National Liberation Army *(Ejército de Liberación Nacional)*

FARC – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia *(Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia)*

FM – Field Manual

MoD – Ministry of Defense (Colombia)

NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OPSEC – Operational Security

PME – Professional Military Education

SAMS – School of Advanced Military Studies

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